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## UK IBCs' Adaptability in Mainland China

Programs, Practices, and Policies

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# UK IBCs' Adaptability in Mainland China: Programs, Practices, and Policies

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*Abstract: Aligning a transnational educational framework in an institution's strategic development policy is crucial for UK higher education institutions to remain competitive. Though academia has previously integrated internationalization into their strategic plans, the current saturated educational landscape has demanded a broader spectrum of activities to increase an institution's prestige, reputation, research capacity, and income diversification. Mounting expectations by institutional stakeholders compelled by increasing demands in emerging economies to reduce student outflows have intensified interest in creating international branch campuses. To persuade UK institutions to create additional branch campuses in China, the centralized government has aggressively promoted incentive programs by investing enormous capital in developing the necessary facilities; however, stifling regulations exist. The purpose of this article is to discuss how UK higher education institutions adapt their programs, practices, and policies of their international branch campuses in mainland China through a case study analysis of the University of Nottingham Ningbo and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. By discussing the conditions and practices of existing UK institutions operating in China, perspective institutions can determine the suitability of potential expansion utilizing the international branch campus model.*

*Keywords: China, IBC Adaptability, International Branch Campus, UK Higher Education Institutions*

## Introduction

Over the past couple of decades, higher educational institutions (HEIs) have been forced to adapt their existing organizational paradigms to cope with modern academia's growing realities. Historically, English HEIs are highly regulated by national agencies, stifled by abstrusely conservative ideological agendas seeking to provide highly subsidized education to local students (Scott and Mhupiew 2021). While such political policies maintain a strong electoral appeal, HEIs have experienced large-scale market saturation resulting in intense domestic competition, increased operational costs, and further dependence on foreign student enrollment to maintain institutional growth projections (Healey 2015; Hubble and Bolton 2018; Scott and Mhupiew 2021). Growing expectations of stakeholders compelled by increasing demand for higher education in emerging economies, coupled with improved political relationships (Girdzijauskaite and Radzeviciene 2014), have shifted toward a transnational education (TNE) framework. Though academia has previously integrated internationalization into their strategic plans to maintain cooperative alignment with other institutions and agencies to offset economic burdens related to research and development, the evolving educational landscape has caused strategies to incorporate a wider spectrum of activities that create a broader institutional presence. Each enters the relationship with a similar goal for expansion; yet, the level of involvement, resources, and commitment often vary among partners. While regular relational upkeep is required, institutions often develop group dependency; even with these concerns, the HEIs' increasingly competitive environment eliminates their ability to be risk-averse. The modified strategies result in HEIs operating more like business enterprises than traditional educational institutions (Wilkins 2016).

With larger numbers of HEIs seeking to diversify their operational portfolio and several governments now competing for HEIs' interests, host countries attempt to court reputable HEIs to stem the outflux of talent by providing educational opportunities that mirror foreign institutions. The inclusion of international branch campuses (IBCs) in a region's educational market reduces the

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economic stresses of the ‘brain drain,’ improves local economies through infrastructure initiatives, and leads to increased technology transfer (Healey 2016). The inclusion of IBCs in new markets has a potential knock-on effect by improving the host country’s national HEIs through research collaboration and competition. Like the UAE, Singapore, and Malaysia, some host countries have created policies that seek to attract numerous international HEIs to their region, creating a global education hub (Ahmad, Buchanan, and Ahmad 2016; Wilkins and Huisman 2012). To promote opportunities, host countries like UAE and Singapore offer policies that allow for 100 percent ownership of their IBCs and a high degree of autonomy from local regulatory bodies regarding curriculum and branch operations (Kinser and Lane 2016; Wilkins and Huisman 2012). China and South Korea offer similar financial incentives to attract HEI investment; however, they maintain a more regulated control over institutional management and curriculum presentation (Kinser and Lane 2016). While most HEIs refuse to operate under strict international government oversight, particularly when policies could endanger institutional prestige, prospects of a large talent pool can be tempting for HEIs seeking to build their international reputation and research capacity.

To persuade HEIs to create additional IBCs within China, the centralized government has encouraged local and provincial governments to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on facilities. Unlike the UAE, the Chinese central government requires all IBCs to be part of a Sino-foreign partnership where the Chinese institution or educational group are the principal stakeholders in the newly formed IBC operation. Legal entities are accredited as new private universities within China and must operate within the governmental mandate; qualifications may be equivalent to those of the foreign institutions but must meet the Chinese government’s demands before issuing. The expectation to conform and the Chinese government’s various regulatory demands may exert significant pressure on the HEI as the IBCs conditions may differ substantially from the HEI’s home country, creating a conflict of duality. The need to localize curriculum and operations is often necessary to meet regulations and cultural norms; yet, to maintain a strategic advantage over domestic HEIs, the IBC must retain the home institution’s identity (Feng 2013). If the Chinese government exercises a stifling number of regulatory hurdles to which the IBC must adapt, it may emancipate its operations from the home institutions’ designs and operate entirely like a domestic HEI. The duality of maintaining operational similarities of the home HEI while simultaneously localizing internally and externally creates an awkward predicament needing resolution for long-term success to be attainable for all parties.

As China continues to attract a greater number of HEIs from the UK and worldwide, the complexities of operating an offshore IBC, compounded by robust regulatory controls and partnership, need to be understood and scrutinized. The purpose of this article is to discuss how UK higher education institutions (University of Nottingham and University of Liverpool) adapt their programs, practices, and policies of their international branch campuses in mainland China through a case study analysis. By determining to what extent UK international branch campuses are influenced by social policy and regulations in China; how institutions adjust their practices, programs, and policies to satisfy social needs and demands; and what professional opportunities exist to strengthen organizational culture, perspective HEIs can determine the suitability of potential expansion policies to mainland China.

## The Various Meanings of IBC

The relative newness of IBCs and the limited publications on the topic complicates the theoretical understanding of core terminology essential in discussions. Inconsistencies with an IBC definition are based on institutional and regional academic governance, coupled with numerous legal and financial structures of IBCs worldwide. Healey (2018) constructed his definition on the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education’s (OBHE) explanation that states an IBC is an institution located and operating within a brick-and-mortar facility outside its home country. These institutions must award at least one accredited degree by the foreign

institution recognized within that institution's country of origin. Cai and Hall (2016) followed a similar explanation developed by the Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT) that describes an IBC as an entity owned, at least in part, by a foreign institution that operates under the same name as the home university. The entity provides access to an entire academic program with face-to-face instruction, leading to an accredited degree awarded and recognized by the foreign institution. Wilkins and Rumbley (2018) claim an international branch campus must be recognized as such on the home institution's website, and partner institutions are not the equivalent to branch campuses. The Chinese government enacted, through policy, a definition that applies to all activities involving foreign educational organizations participating within its domestic market. Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (SFCRS) or the similarly named Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools refers to programs and institutions operating in Mainland China, cosponsored and maintained by Chinese and foreign HEIs that admit predominately Chinese nationals (Cai and Hall 2016; Li et al. 2016; Lin and Mengjin 2016). This article adopts the Chinese assigned definition to maintain consistency as it applies directly to the institutions operating within mainland China.

## **Influence of Chinese Social Policy**

The contrasting approaches to educational globalization by UK HEIs and the Chinese government, the desire to strengthen institutional economic stability and growth versus providing a public service and improving market conditions, requires both sides to compromise aspects of their policy. Healey's (2016) conversations with IBC managers indicated that those studied felt China was substantially more involved in institutional management, reducing the ability for IBCs to self-govern and introduce interorganizational policies to promote sustainable growth. Hou, Montgomery, and McDowell (2014) and Lin (2016) claim that the Chinese government adjusts existing policies, ensuring higher-quality partnerships and compliance with regulations, rather than implementing stifling controls over IBC operations. In the infancy of Chinese educational liberalization, policies were a broad controlling mechanism attempting to attract international HEIs to meet growing social demands. Quality assurance and evaluation of international HEIs were virtually non-existent, resulting in a flood of sub-standard institutions pushing lower-tiered programs into the market. Chinese economic growth correlated with the immense development of the SFCRS programs and the attraction of numerous UK HEI. Between 2010 to 2015, market conditions in the UK deteriorated due to the global economic slowdown, applying pressure on lower-tiered HEIs to seek alternative revenue streams to maintain operations; thus, a jump from 1218 to 2371 registered SFCRS programs occurred (Lin 2016). As market saturation transpired and Chinese GDP per Capita slowed, governmental policies were adapted to reduce redundancy and improve the quality of programs being offered. Though adjustments in policies are meant to reduce inefficiencies in the market, government regulations' speed and opacity reduce an IBC's ability to implement long-term operational planning (Healey 2016).

Policy reforms cause numerous dilemmas for operational strategies in existing IBCs; however, the requirements to enter the Chinese market may prevent numerous top-tiered UK HEIs from participating. The legal obligation to form a binding agreement with a Chinese partner imposes considerable changes to UK HEIs' operations from their home institution and risk to reputation. With the Chinese partner considered the majority stakeholder in the IBC alliance, the UK HEI's direction may not be fully implemented. Higher profile UK HEIs can circumvent this policy by being selective of the partner chosen; top-tiered or notable UK HEIs are allotted considerable power in negotiations, dictating terms of power distribution and operational agendas. The University of Nottingham famously selected a lower-ranking Chinese partner (Wanli Education Group) to ensure their IBC operations ultimately conform to the homogenizing strategy demanded (Feng 2013). While the University of Nottingham's IBC governing board aligned with Chinese regulations demanding Chinese nationals maintain the

majority of seats, the University of Nottingham selected the majority from their home institution to ensure control over all academic considerations. Wanli maintains control over facilities and non-academic operations (Feng 2013); Wanli built the facilities used at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China's (UNNC) campus and must coordinate with Chinese regulatory bodies to maintain compliance with numerous government education policies.

The University of Liverpool's strategy of partnering with a similarly positioned Chinese partner demanded less academic control in the IBC but improved the institution's social acceptability. Xi'an Jiaotong University has a considerable reputation in China, providing assurances of quality to students. The University of Liverpool did not need to create a Chinese brand; their partnership expedited social integration and appeal. The University of Liverpool created numerous safeguards to ensure the protection of its reputation. By naming the IBC Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University (XJTLU), the University of Liverpool claimed to be a signal of respect (Feng 2013); however, this allows a level of deniability and a reputational onus on Xi'an Jiaotong University (Zheng and Kinser 2016). The University of Liverpool's XJTLU IBC is considered an autonomous institution that shares resources from both partners' home institutions but operates under its own objectives. The autonomous definition also provides deniability to the home institution, safeguarding it from any unexpected political instability or program failure. UNNC and XJTLU's opposing approaches signal that regulating the entry of international HEIs can be bypassed with calculated preparation by notable institutions. SFCRS entry requirements are likely to limit lower-tiered HEIs, as they cannot be as selective and have a reduced ability to negotiate with potential partners.

An indirect factor when selecting an appropriate Chinese partner is the Chinese HEIs' *guanxi* (its ability to influence and call favors). Cultural differences between the UK and Chinese educational systems are well documented; nevertheless, the importance of *guanxi* for academic institutions can be lost on UK HEIs (Lindsay and Antoniou 2016). Protectionism may be the principal rationale for imposed entry requirements, eliminating educational colonialism concerns; yet, a positive externality of creating a partnership is that the UK HEI can utilize their partners' existing networks and influence within the Chinese market. The regulatory red-tape for all operations is notoriously frustrating in China, reducing market entry or operations effectiveness. Careful selection of partners and locations can provide beneficial advantages in obtaining scarce resources, information, and professionals. The University of Nottingham's appointment of Dr. Fujia to Chancellor and later President of UNNC exploited his considerable *guanxi* in his home city of Ningbo to fast-track the IBC approval process. The partnership with Wanli solidified Nottingham's ability to garner enormous governmental grants and financial support. Wanli's *guanxi* in Ningbo was crucial for gaining approval for operating UNNC programs at its Zhejiang Wanli University campus before UNNC campus completion in 2006 (Ennew and Fujia 2009). The University of Liverpool capitalized on Xi'an Jiaotong's *guanxi* by accessing grants and free land leasing by the Suzhou city government. University of Liverpool's appointment of Dr. Xi to Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive President of XJTLU formalizes Xi'an Jiaotong's relationship and strengthens government support through Dr. Xi's Standing Committee membership in Xi'an Municipal People's Congress (XJTLU, n.d.-a). Though policies controlling market entry by international HEIs intend to protect China from losing traditional educational values, these have a negligible impact on top-tiered UK HEIs imposing control over IBC operations. Instead, required partnerships assist the UK HEI in traversing institutional management's cultural differences, easing regulations, and policy oversight.

## Adjustment of Programs, Practices, and Policies

Adapting to the social landscape can create a duality dilemma: maintain homogenization with the UK HEI or localize and develop practices akin to domestic HEIs. UNNC's and XJTLU's approach to institutional adjustments differs considerably, with UNNC minimizing differences

among all University of Nottingham campuses to maintain a distinct culture. XJTLU adjusts practices to incorporate a more localized curriculum but still imports most of its academic framework from the University of Liverpool. If we measure government policies as an extension of social needs and demands, we can generalize the degree to which UK HEIs localize their systems or import their entire model. With a desire to attract international HEIs that can promote technology transfer and knowledge exchange, regional governments offer attractive incentive packages. However, programs available by SFCRS are heavily concentrated in limited fields of study, limiting the desired knowledge exchange sought through policies. Lin and Mengjin (2016) highlighted that distribution in SFCRS is imbalanced, emphasizing undergraduate science majors rather than graduate programs or humanities. As core sciences are universal, they are more efficient in an IBC's core model. Studies within the humanities are more regionally focused as social norms substantially impact the curriculum; limitations on debate through censorship (policies limiting discussion on topics considered sensitive to Chinese security and harmony) also reduce an IBC's desire to embrace programs that potentially create disturbances in its operations. Hou, Montgomery, and McDowell (2014) claimed that an emphasis on management and economics are not the desired programs outlined in the policy, as there are widely available at a suitable standard within domestic HEIs. Ennew and Fujia (2009) discussed adjusting examples and case studies within management programs, allowing them to serve the Chinese environment better. Ultimately, ineffective control mechanisms by the government and broad definitions within policy mandates create differing opinions of acceptable SFCRS engagement.

For success to be achieved in any project, especially over the long-term, quality is essential (Lin and Mengjin 2016); however, China has not fully recognized the importance of quality assurances (QA) within the SFCRS (Gu 2009). While specific mechanisms have been developed for domestic institutions, ensuring conformity and adherence to governmental policies, the unfamiliarity with changing political and cultural differences reduces numerous programs' quality (Lin and Zhiping 2009). Many of the systems directly overseeing quality control rely on self-compliance, where the establishment of policies and QA mechanisms are done by the SFCRS community. The various groups that participate within the Sino-Foreign cooperation make the task difficult, as many cosponsor partnership programs do not invest the resources in maintaining QA levels necessary for IBCs to be reputable. Discrepancies in the past have caused some institutions and students to question the quality and effectiveness of all TNEs; this skepticism has been a driving factor for most UK TNE institutions adopting international QA as a method to guarantee the legitimacy of their programs (Gu 2009). The UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) published a governing code of conduct, the "Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Collaborative Provision and Flexible and Distributed Learning," that sets to standardize international behavior by UK institutions while conducting TNE (Lin and Mengjin 2016). Other countries and quality assurance organizations (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ENQA]) have also introduced guidelines, to various degrees of success, developing policies and procedures that should be incorporated. Though these guidelines assist TNE outside China, their benefits are mitigated by the lack of proper accreditation mechanisms within mainland China (Gu 2009; Lin 2016; Lin and Mengjin 2016).

The program's curriculum has been adjusted for the Chinese market; however, the degree of adjustments varies between each SFCRS program and IBC. Most IBCs have instituted a four-year undergraduate program allowing for foundational development, especially in English for Academic Purposes (Li et al. 2016). The four-year program also bridges the years studied in the two countries, twelve in China and thirteen in the UK (Ennew and Fujia 2009). 'Year 0' is a response to perceived deficiencies in the Chinese secondary school system for core understanding and preparation for students to engage in an English medium environment. Even with minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) requirements for all

programs, most IBCs believe that an additional year is necessary to fully understand the 'Western' educational environment and how it is different from their previous studies. Chinese regulations require patriotic Chinese Marxist programs to maintain social strength, understanding, and stability within the curriculum (Guan 2021), though SFCRS are exempted from the otherwise mandatory military training programs in an undergraduate freshman program. Examining all the UK IBC program descriptions, modules focused on Chinese Marxist theory are explicitly noted, though many of the IBCs may employ similar methods of integrating these classes in another core subject like classroom skills and skill development workshops. Interesting IBCs are also exempt from requiring a Communist Party Office and Communist Party Secretary, though almost all SFCRS incorporate them into their organizational design. Even UNNC, with their desire to minimize localization and maintain substantial homogeneity to the home institution, developed a Communist Party Office in its core operations and appointed a Communist Party Secretary for the school. President Fujia claimed that introducing a Communist Secretary to the campus may diverge from standard University of Nottingham operations, but this role will help communicate UNNC position to the government to better position itself with regulations (Ennew and Fujia 2009).

The Chinese government is concerned that by allowing SFCRS to self-govern and replicate their UK HEIs in mainland China, the traditional educational system may decline. The complexities of enforcing IBCs to adopt all policies and avoid homogeneity would be insurmountable, especially with the desire to attract top-tiered HEIs to form cooperatives in China. UK HEIs are incredibly cautious of the significant degrees of localization mandated, concerned about the adherent risk to the home university's reputation but additionally the marginal enrollment increases compared to the sizable cost and resource allotment to adapt curriculum. Brand impact and social recognition are major factors resisting localization within the IBC. UK IBCs' 'Britishness' or 'internationalness' are more substantial assets than many of the programs offered, limiting the flexibility IBCs have with their present image. UK IBCs predominately recruit students from upper-middle-class to upper-class families, as tuition costs ten to twenty times the standard domestic university. For the 2021/22 academic year, a typical undergraduate program for Mainland Chinese students at UNNC costs approximately RMB 100,000 per year (UNNC 2021), while tuition at XJTLU is approximately RMB 88,000 (XJTLU, n.d.-b). These prices are substantially higher than traditional Chinese institutions, where tuition at Tsinghua University (2021), the top-ranked university in China, is between RMB 6,000 to 54,000 per year, with most program tuition fees ranging from RMB 6,000 to 10,000. Students are sold on a brand promise that the experience at the IBC would simulate life abroad; all studies would follow the UK model, and the education would be virtually equal. These promises inherently lead to cultural differences; however, many managers believe that the students are the primary source of resistance to the localization of the programs. Students want to study at IBCs to earn a UK degree in a UK environment instead of a watered-down Chinese version (Healey 2015). Robust localization or domestication of the programs in IBCs are vehemently opposed by students and their families, even if changes are meant to maintain Chinese educational values (Healey 2016). Localization also impacts the dynamics of the faculty and their ability to perform their tasks. The clear majority of UK IBC faculty are UK seconds (visiting lecturers) or international hires; this maintains the 'Britishness' of the institution and the programs. Seconds offer a link to the home HEI and a form of QA; these links and QA mechanisms diminish with increased localization of programs. Students may contest modules taught by Chinese faculty, as it lacks the desired 'Britishness' students. While localizing and adapting differing policies at the IBC may reduce cultural differences and assist with operations efficiency, resistance by the home HEI, faculty, and students make extensive scale adaption impractical. XJTLU's autonomous operation strategy may differ with leadership to UNNC or other IBCs; yet, the reliance on international faculty members to maintain the 'international' appearance is evident.



## Strengthening Organizational Culture

Faculty is the point of contact with the students; the quality and presentation represent the perceived strategy undertaken by the IBC. The scale of international instructors is considered a clear indication of the localization's level within the IBC. As international instructors indirectly equate to 'Britishness' or 'internationalness' of a campus or the curriculum, student perception expects most faculty to be represented by this group. Approximately 90 percent of faculty at UNNC and 70 percent at XJTLU are considered international, seconds, or international hires, clearly indicating the magnitude of maintaining this image is a strategic decision (Feng 2013). However, international faculty members are drastically more expensive than similarly qualified domestic instructors and require an extensive support network. In assigning seconds, UK HEIs seek to maintain UK-level QA and management of their IBCs and curriculum. Seconds maintain their home institution's rank, benefits, and additional compensation for accepting the IBC post; they are considered a priority but costly. International hires may cost fractionally less; however, recruiting quality international members in Asia is expensive due to limited numbers and competition (Scott 2021). Seconds and international hires represent the brand UK IBCs have forged but at considerable expense. Chinese faculty generally consists of support staff meant to assist with cultural differences and support the international faculty. Theoretically, effective training programs can reduce the performance gaps between domestically hired and internationally hired staff and at a fraction of the price (Garrett 2018); however, IBCs' dependence on international labor due to brand positioning creates substantial financial and logistical issues.

The recruitment and employment of numerous international faculty members are extremely taxing on numerous functional departments within the IBC. International tax law, Chinese tax law, English tax law, immigration policies, qualification assessment, and information exchange require considerable technical expertise and resources to maintain an appropriate operation level. IBC and most UK HEIs lack the skills to effectively manage the complexities of maintaining and operating these departments, leading to complaints and conflicts (Healey 2016). IBCs that depend primarily on domestic labor would ease the functional department burden, as the sections would only deal with Chinese employment policies instead of numerous international bodies. In theory, the functional departments could be managed by knowledgeable local staff, utilizing their understanding of local regulations to manage the operations best. Beyond payroll and immigration concerns, international faculty require support services to assist with their daily living conditions. Language barriers and cultural differences impact the adjustment international faculty undergo during their initial transition when first arriving in China, relying on the IBC to assist with their issues. With limited resources, departments' pressure can be immense, leading to reduced emphasis on other resource-demanding ventures like training and research development. International faculty often feel isolated and ill-equipped to manage the Chinese research funding policies, language barriers, and limited institutional collaboration agreements with other Chinese HEIs. The adjustment difficulties lead many faculty members to feel mistreated by the home university or forgotten, blaming the IBC's distance for hindering their research development.

Healey (2016) noted numerous complaints by managers and international faculty about the support and training they receive in their IBCs. Faculty remarked about a lack of information about their specific duties or the outside requirements, the on-campus accommodations, and the disconnect with Chinese society. The surprising amount of in-class and development hours required compared to their post in the home institution, the lack of emphasis on language development (Mandarin) and limited professional development programs for career advancement additional complicate adjustment (Healey 2016). These issues are not confined to the IBC but rather systematic neglect by leadership to adequately prepare and implement their faculty policies. The fear of commitment by senior UK HEI faculty and the informal recruitment of instructors are indications that UK HEIs are neglecting the necessary mechanisms to support an IBC thousands

of miles away. As IBCs are generally small operations compared to the home HEI, leadership may implement unrealistic visions or disregard operational inefficiency; so, senior faculty members view IBCs as second-tier positions. Upon placement, the position's realities can compound cultural shock and relocation anxiety, endangering the quality the IBC presents in the classroom. Healey (2016) described some managers as feeling neglected, and though they came to China with grand visions of adventure and hopes to develop a stronger cultural understanding, after a short period, many are attempting to return to the UK HEI or gain employment elsewhere. Lin and Zhiping (2009) remarked that the frequent turnover of staff in SFCRS predictably harms the quality of education and the institution's reputation.

## Conclusion

Academia is continuing to evolve from singular national pillars to large-scale institutions that resemble multinational corporations. With geopolitical shifts, a waning international student population, and governmental reforms focused on austerity, university stakeholders are desperate to engage in institutional growth strategies to maintain their institutional competitiveness in an increasingly saturated domestic education market. The combination of push and pull factors has led to integrating transnational philosophies, seeking offshore markets to subsidize market fluctuations in the UK. Transnational education consists of many activities; however, the focus has been on single-based non-equity alliances, dual-based non-equity alliances, or equity alliances. All strategies primarily focus on emerging markets, seeking to capitalize on capacity and technology shortfalls within their higher education industry. UK HEIs have developed entry strategies depending on market growth and the institution's willingness to invest economic resources and potentially risk reputational harm. The risk to reputation is the most contentious area, causing many top-tiered UK HEIs to withhold engagement, maintaining a 'wait and see' approach. Mid and lower-tiered HEIs are less self-sufficient, lacking the considerable support Oxford or Cambridge receive through donors; thus, they employ educational strategies to alleviate growing financial hardships.

With economic reforms and a slow liberalization of their educational market, China has become one of the key destinations for international HEIs seeking to engage in transnational education. To regulate international IBCs and impose a protectionist policy, all SFCRS require UK HEIs to form alliances with a domestic partner. Chinese partners are viewed as the principal stakeholder, with the board of governors consisting predominately of Chinese appointees. The intention of forcing Chinese control is to ensure that programs and operations are developed and maintained for China's advancement. A localized international curriculum will bind the UK and China; however, notable universities can manipulate this policy depending on their strategic direction. UNNC and XJTLU, the largest UK IBCs in China, took opposite approaches to the SFCRS formation and operations of their IBC. UNNC purposely selected a lower-ranked Chinese HEI so that it could maintain academic control of the IBC. UNNC leveraged their name to appoint officials, both international and Chinese, to maintain control over the school, allowing a solid homogeneousness between the IBC and the home university. XJTLU selected a Chinese partner that was organizationally equal in strengths and international notoriety. The governors' board is predominately Chinese, with a significant representation from the Chinese university, leading to a more autonomous entity than a typical IBC. The intentions of both IBCs may differ, but an analysis of the localization level UK IBCs undergo to comply with regulations or social demands will clarify the viability of these operations long-term and the suitability of these operations with UK HEI strategies.

UK IBCs carefully select their programs and curriculum, maximize their existing resources from their home institution, and reduce the required altering of material to minimize program cost. UNNC attempts to conform to all programs to match their other locations' curriculum, reducing localization in class to specific examples in business management programs. XJTLU also focuses

on programs that both partner institutions already maintain a strong presence, attempting to utilize existing resources and strengths in their IBC campus. IBCs strongly focus on the sciences, where cultural differences are less common due to the theories and curriculum's universal nature. The humanities are less common, generally only languages and economics, because of the influence social norms have on theories used and material presented. Differences between the UK and China do impact the design of programs and the organization of the IBC. A Chinese Marxist course is mandatory for all Chinese university students; yet, IBCs do not list it as a core program, instead merging it with another program likely in the first year of study. While in-class pedagogical approaches may differ slightly because of the students' mixed language ability, the core functions of the class have only localized a fraction. As most of the faculty employed at IBCs are either seconds or international hires, their ability to adapt the curriculum for the local audience is limited. Much of the resistance is not from the UK home institution but the IBC programs' students. While the attraction to the IBC is the image of 'Britishness,' incorporating an actual localized content may be helpful in the Chinese market; however, students oppose these changes as they fear it will water down their 'British' education.

IBCs depend on foreign faculty to maintain the desired image. Foreign faculty, especially seconds from the home institution, act as both mentors and QA agents. Their experience at the home institution helps maintain the 'British' feeling desired by the IBC and the students; yet, Healey (2015) and Cai and Hall (2016) noted that appropriate resources were not allocated toward training and development. Cai and Hall (2016) found that most international faculty, especially seconds, were not satisfied with their placement other than the financial benefits. Faculty stated that the home institution did not support them; they were provided little information about the extent of the position or were not allotted the resources or time to fulfill their research desires. Healey (2015) explained that IBCs are considered a low-tiered placement for many senior academics, and very few desire placement. As the numerous concerns mount, many faculty members desire to return to their home institution or attempt to find new jobs, creating a considerable turnover. High turnover can potentially damage the reputation of the IBCs with lower standards of teaching that sub-standard instructors may bring. With increasing numbers of talented local instructors, an IBC's dependence on international faculty reduces the school's ability to remain competitive over the long term. The demands on functional departments are incredibly taxing, with most IBCs not equipped to handle the complexities of managing tax or immigration laws. It is the functional departments that have adapted in the IBC setting. Functional departments must expand their roles and incorporate a broader spectrum of roles to their home institution counterparts, significantly changing their appearances.

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